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TAGS: PGOV PREL PINS I2

SUBJECT: LOCAL BAGHDAD AUTHORITIES BLAST CHALABI'S POPULAR COMMITTEE INITIATIVE

REF: A. BAGHDAD 680

1B. BAGHDAD 585

1C. BAGHDAD 386

(U) Classified by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Margaret Scobey, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) Summary: PRT officers spoke with Rusafa and Karada District Advisory Council (DAC) chairmen February 22 to discuss their views on Ahmad Chalabi's popular committees initiative. Both said that the general consensus among DAC, Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) and Provincial Council (PC) members is that Chalabi's plan is marginalizing existing local governance structures and setting up committees that will have little support in the neighborhoods they are supposed to represent. Both agreed that Chalabi is alienating community leaders by arbitrarily selecting committee leaders who lack the grassroots support the initiative needs to succeed. Chalabi has still failed to set the mandate and size of the committees, which they said will likely lead to the formation of unwieldy structures with unclear responsibilities. End Summary.

Karada DAC Chair Comments

12. (C) Karada DAC Chair Mohammad Al-Rubaie told us that Chalabi hastily chose & liaison officers to head popular committees in each of Baghdad's 10 security areas. Al-Rubaie said it was clear from the conduct of the meeting that these officers will be de facto committee heads who report to Chalabi directly.

13. (C) Al-Rubaie said the liaison officer Chalabi appointed for his district is an unknown figure in the community and that no DAC or NAC members had been consulted before he was appointed. Al-Rubaie said he provided the liaison officer with a list of names for suggested members for Karada's popular committee, but the appointee showed no interest in suggestions from the DAC. Al-Rubaie also said he saw lists of names provided by attendees from Sadr City and that militia members were among the names.

14. (C) Al-Rubaie said Chalabi and others he has involved in the process are suggesting that the committees have one member per 1,000 residents in the district, which would lead to huge, unwieldy committees with thousands of members in Baghdad's larger areas. He suggested a ratio of one member per 6,000-10,000 residents in order to keep the committee size more manageable.

15. (C) Al-Rubaie said the committees should have a clear, bounded mandate limited to passing information on security issues and displaced people and that the committees should be disbanded upon the conclusion of BSP. He suggested setting quotas to include members of civil society, religious leaders, women, and businessmen. He said failure to set

quotas would likely exclude many of these groups. Al-Rubaie said DAC and NAC members should play a consultative role with the committees, but opposed having DAC and NAC members serve on the committees to avoid distracting them from their duties.

Rusafa DAC Chair Comments

¶6. (C) Rusafa DAC Chairman Jamal Ehlayeb Khalaf Al-Rajihi said the liaison officer Chalabi appointed for his area is unknown to the community and had been selected with no consultation with DAC or NAC members. He said DAC members from other districts complained that the liaison officers appointed for their areas were also unknowns.

¶7. (C) Al-Rajihi said he managed to speak with the appointed liaison officer for his area, who said committee members should report to him and that he would in turn report to Chalabi. Al-Rajihi said the people his area's liaison officer was choosing to serve on the popular committee lacked the grassroots support and contacts to make the initiative successful.

¶8. (C) Al-Rajihi said he had spoken to several Provincial Council members about Chalabi's conduct and that they also felt marginalized and excluded. He said that several DAC chairmen and PC members are trying to arrange a meeting to discuss the issue.

KHALILZAD